

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-11 ISO-00 EB-07 DHA-02

ORM-02 SCA-01 FDRE-00 DPW-01 IGA-02 PC-01 HEW-02

SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

TRSE-00 ABF-01 OMB-01 /159 W
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O 221415Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3682

INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

SECDEF/WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 0139

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SREF, AG, SS

SUBJECT: ICRC APPEAL FOR REFUGEE AID

REF: STATE 014263 (DTG 202347Z JAN 76)

1. WE OF COURSE HAVE NOT BEEN PERMITTED (NOR HAVE WE SOUGHT TO) VISIT TINDOUF AREA AND HAVE NOT SEEN REFUGEES FOR OURSELVES. WE UNDERSTAND HOWEVER THAT FACTS ARE AS DESCRIBED BY ICRC, ALTHOUGH REMARKS OF SENIOR ALGERIAN OFFICIAL (ALGIERS 0110 NOTAL) INDICATE THAT UN HIGH COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES ESTIMATES THERE ONLY 15,000 OF THEM ON ALGERIAN SIDE OF LINE.

2. THERE ARE MANY GAPS IN OUR INFORMATION ON THESE REFUGEES.

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A. WE DO NOT KNOW COMPOSITION OF REFUGEES, I.E.,

HOW MANY ARE REGUIBAT TRIBESPEOPLE (TOTAL TRIBAL STRENGTH IS SOMETHING LIKE 50,000) FROM NORTHERN SAHARA, OR WHETHER THEY COME FROM ALL OVER WESTERN SAHARA.

B. WE ARE NOT SURE OF MOTIVES FOR THEIR MOVE. ALGERIANS CLAIM THEY FLED OUT OF FEAR AND DISTASTE FOR MOROCCANS AND PRESS HERE IS FULL OF HORROR STORIES RE THEIR TREATMENT AT HANDS OF INVADING ARMY. ON OTHER HAND, MOROCCAN CHARGE HERE ARGUES THAT THEY FLED AS RESULT OF ALGERIAN-INSPIRED PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN DEPICITNG MOROCCANS AS ORGES AND THAT MANY REFUGEES, AT LEAST THOSE IN FORMER COLONY, ARE NOW RETURNING TO THEIR SAHARAN TOWNS AND TAKING UP NORMAL LIVES.

C. THOUGH ALGERIAN GOVT CLAIMS IT IS SUPPLYING "ALL SERVICES" TO REFUGEES, WE DO NOT KNOW HOW WELL THEY IN FACT BEING CARED FOR, OR HOW MUCH SERVICE BEING EXTENDED TO THOSE REFUGEES LIVING WITHIN FORMER COLONY.

3. WE WERE UNDER IMPRESSION US RED CROSS ALREADY CONTRIBUTING TO SUPPORT OF REFUGEES. IN CONVERSATION LAST MONTH, SENIOR OFFICIAL IN ALGERIAN PRESIDENCY ASSERTED THAT THIS WAS CASE.

4. OUR CONCLUSION IS THAT REFUGEES ARE GENUINE BUT THAT THEY HAVE FLED OF OWN VOLITION AND NOT BECAUSE THEY EXPELLED. POLITICS ARE CLEARLY PLAYING A BIG ROLE IN SAHARA REFUGEE QUESTION, BUT WE GATHER ICRC CONSIDRS THEM TO BE LEGITIMATE REFUGEES AND BELIEVE WE SHOULD ACCEPT THIS STATEMENT AT FACE VALUE.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. THAT WE MAKE APPROPRIATE, PRO-FORMA CONTRIBUTION THROUGH ICRC ON BASIS OF ICRC'S FINDING THAT SAHARA REFUGEES ARE IN FACT REFUGEES.

B. THAT WE MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THIS CONTRIBUTION BEING MADE STRICTLY ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS AND THAT IT IN NO WAY ENDORSES POSITION OF ANY OF THE PARTIES
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ON SUBSTANCE OF SAHRA DISPUTE.PARKER

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